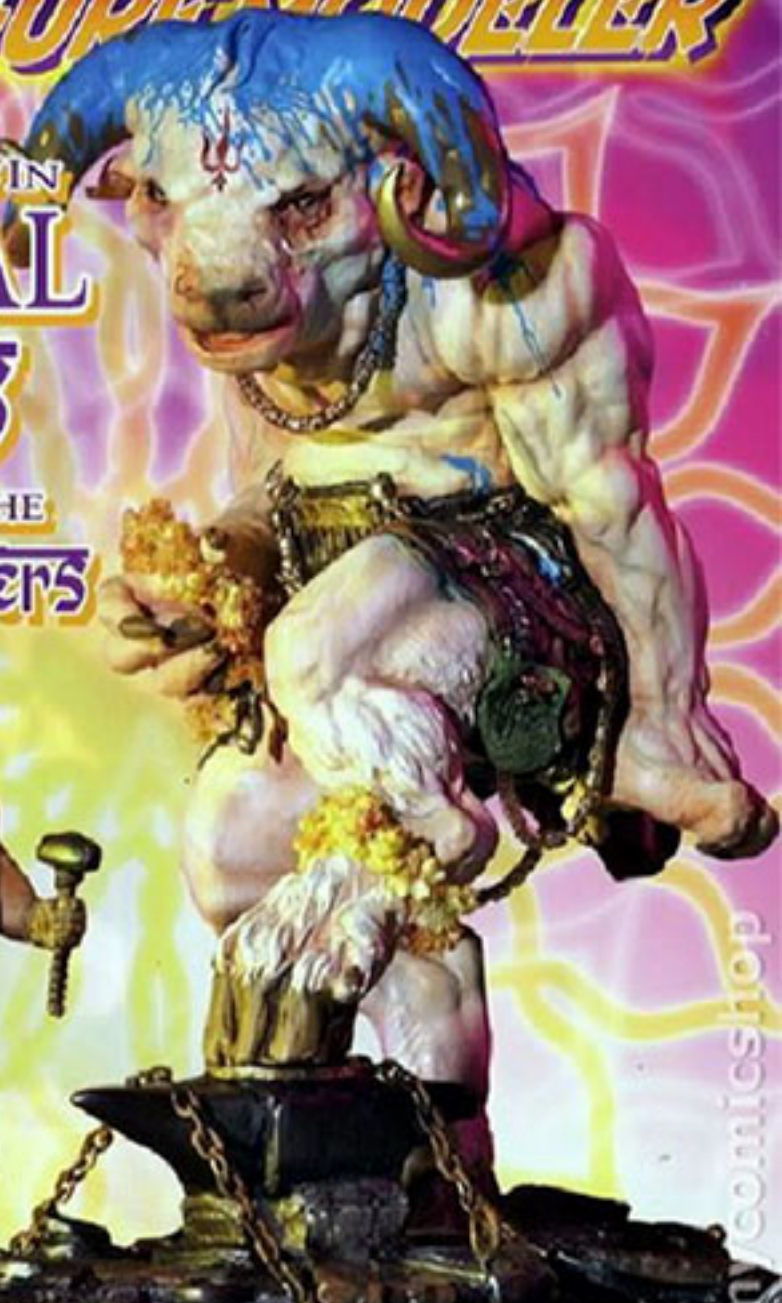


# AMAZING FIGURE MODELER

TURN ON & TUNE IN  
**ORIGINAL  
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AFM INTERVIEWS THE  
**SHIFLETT brothers**

ALL UP FOR THE  
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# Shifflett Brothers

The AFM Interview

by Todd Powell

Looking at the Shifflett Brothers Originals garage kits, you just know these characters have stories to tell. Start with the first: Chloe, the Aviator for Hire. Cigar-chomping Chloe is young and still interested in girlish things like hearts and teddy bears, but carries enough skulls and weapons to prove she means business. It's "kind of a Tatum O'Neal in space-type scene," said Jarrod, the younger Shifflett Brother. You might be inclined to ask what kind of vessel the aviator pilots — a question that wouldn't inspire the kind of cracks other female GKs might, because Chloe, unlike many of her resin sisters, doesn't let much flesh show through her gear. "There are almost no original girl resin kits that aren't T&A pieces," said Brandon Shifflett. "Not that we don't like a good T&A piece, but come on. Chloe is in charge of her own situation. I hope that comes through."

Principia Iva, the youngster lugging an indignant monster in Principia and the Serpent, thinks she's a veterinarian. She's a giant, granddaughter of Old Iva, better known as The Easter Island Giant. Principia likes to "help" animals such as the serpent ... whether they want it or not.

O! Scratch is not the devil, but he and his brothers (one of them is another Shifflett sculpture named The High Demon) play up the fact that humans think they look like demons. Noymub, of the Shiffletts' heavy Deal with the Devil kit, isn't necessarily Satan either: he's a Minotaur who needs a new shoe and he doesn't look forward to going through the process of having one nailed on any more than the rest of us enjoy having a tooth extracted.

"No doubt, this is where the true nature of our geekiness can be glimpsed," Brandon said. "When you are sitting in a room alone working on a piece for a hundred, two hundred hours, you come up with all kinds of insights about this character and the scene you're sculpting. We could write a movie script based on all the discussions we've had about Jarrod's Deal with the Devil piece alone." Kits like this inspire others as well. The Originals are creative in ways that reflect beloved mythologies and artists, but they bring something new to the table.

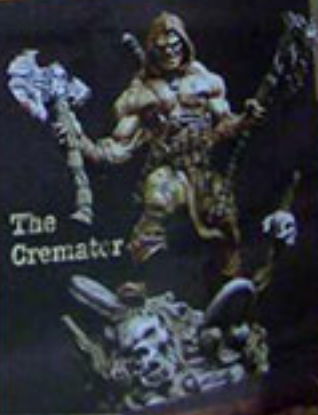
Still, before buying a Shifflett Brothers kit, hobbyists should appreciate that the pieces are true originals, from concept to execution. Deal with the Devil is the newest on the market, and as photos reveal, it's a large, imposing piece, featuring two figures, each powerful in its own right. The power of the larger one is obvious: He's huge, he has muscles on muscles, and he's got horns. But the other figure — he just looks like a burly man doing his job, a bit of flab showing with his muscle, and that hammer's not going to help him much if somehow he aggravates the beast.

Taking the raw castings out of the box though, reveals a few things about the kit you might not notice in photos. Some might say that the piece looks ... well, not quite finished. The figures appear more like clay than one would see on a typical garage kit; not smoothed and hewn into comic book-style muscles.

Where one might expect the characteristics to be sharply delineated, they're sometimes soft and lumpy.


Physical characteristics that are typically subtly done are sometimes harder on Deal with

Chloe  
The  
Aviator  
For Hire



The  
Cremator





## Noynub In The Deal With The Devil




the Devil. These are the biggest things that might surprise a hobbyist. Like all the Shiftett Brothers Originals, the kit has a ton of detail that painters will enjoy discovering and highlighting; but first, they'll have to decide

how much they want to stretch themselves. As AFM writer Mike Falcigno stated in his review of Noynub last issue, "this kit will force painters to venture 'outside' the box because it's a challenge ... and challenge is good!"

"Our stuff is really sketchy," Jarrod said. "We have heard this from the very beginning and of course we see it ourselves. That is just the way it comes out. We are unquestionably the roughest working pro sculptors. This is because Randy (Bowen) and Clay (Moore) would work with us because they were sculptors themselves and they owned their respective companies. They would call us up and curse loudly sometimes, but they would work with us. We've been really lucky and have been fired repeatedly, even though we are freelancers, which is weird."

"Our cleanest, tightest stuff is barely acceptable in the statue world," Brandon said. "It only follows that when we are let off the leash with our original stuff, the pieces have a rough, organic feel. We look a lot at Rodin and his work. We would never compare ourselves to him, obviously, but does every single piece need to be machined or sanded to within an inch of its life? Our tolerances are slack. We've been gratified by the many artists and sculptors who approach us at

O!  
Scratch



Principi  
Iva





Two Axe



Komodo King



The Sea Bear

conventions or online and tell us that this very trait is the reason they like our work."

The Shifflett Brothers are Texans: Brandon lives in Houston; Jarrod lives about an hour away in Beaumont with his wife, Angela Talbot (who's a fantastic sculptor in her own right, Jarrod said, but can never be truly great "because she doesn't sculpt weapons"). The Brothers started their professional sculpting career in the early 1990s, doing maquette work on the video game "Oddworld: Abe's Oddysey", working with creator Lorne Lanning. It's plain that enough people have liked the Shiffletts' style for it to get around, ranging from Toy Biz plastic Marvel Comics character kits that can be purchased for pocket change on eBay, to collectibles from companies including Bowen Designs and Moore Creations, to high-end bronzes of *Of Scratch and Deal with the Devil*.

"We love bronze," Brandon said. "It's a lot of fun and we have more coming. Deep in the Heart Art Foundry in Bastrop, Texas, are great at what they do and they're really good people. We love working with them. Jarrod wants to be immortal. He thought resin might break down in a thousand years, so we had these bronzes done to assuage his huge ego."

Obviously, the Shiffletts have no problem taking shots at themselves, but the truth is, they've won plenty of praise. Alex Ross, acclaimed painter of comics such as DC's *Kingdom Come* and Marvel's *Marvels*, once said: "The talent of the Shifflett Brothers is the strongest of any sculptors in the industry today. I am consistently amazed by the raw power of their work." From Richard Taylor, effects designer and supervisor for Weta (special effects Company behind the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the recent *King Kong* remake), came this: "The Shifflett Brothers are producing some of this hobby's most incredible collectibles. The artistry of their work is only surpassed by the unique and energetic style in which they sculpt each of their figures and this gives their work a completely spontaneous and fresh aesthetic. I am very pleased to have some of their exceptional work in my collection."

In 2006, the Shiffletts decided to turn much of their focus to their original works. What was behind that?

"Ornigod, we were basically kicked out of Toys, with a capital 'T'; they wouldn't freakin' have us," said Jarrod. "I just want to sit around and sculpt Wolverine, Colossus and Juggernaut, but we're sculptors, not politicians. Obviously we've had some lucky exceptions. Bowen has been like a dream to us. But for the most part we polarize the hell out of the boardroom; we're too slow and too sketchy. 'Next sculptor!' No, we need someone who believes in us, like in a movie."

"In all honesty," Brandon added, "in spite of our love for comics, it is a much different feeling when a person approaches you about one of your own creations as opposed to a comic character. For instance, we know that a lot of our love for our Hulk statue or Juggernaut statue comes from the fact that the Hulk and Juggernaut are just really cool characters. We really feel a personal connection when someone genuinely digs one of our original pieces. It's not necessarily better than the other feeling ... just different."

The Shiffletts don't mind a little mystery about how their workload balances out, Jarrod said, adding that their parents let them listen to Kiss when they were kids, "and that has been all the difference." They don't do preliminary sketches because "we just can't draw," Jarrod said; instead, one of them will start sketching out the piece sculpturally, and then it can go back and forth between them, sometimes for months. "Often Jarrod will take mine and help me finish them," Brandon said. "I have a sculpture finishing problem. Actually, we both do."

The Brothers provide art direction for each other and "are so used to each other's work completely sucking that we are never shocked," Jarrod said. Brandon can offer his first criticism of Jarrod's work sight unseen. "The legs are too short. I can give this revision over the phone and, as I said, without actually seeing the piece." He and Jarrod have developed what he described as "artistic shorthand" with each other. "Often Jarrod knows a critique I'm going to make before I've made it, even if it's one I've never given before. That's because Jarrod already knows what is wrong and is looking to me for validation. Or vice versa, obviously."

At the same time they share their works in progress with each other, the Shiffletts also share with anyone else who'd care to see them via the Internet. They have a long-standing Web site through which they offer a dynamic forum that draws many of their fans and fellow sculptors. They fairly regularly participate in forums on other sites (including [amazingmodeler.com](http://amazingmodeler.com)); they have pages on MySpace and Facebook; and they have videos about their sculptures on YouTube and Google. Want to see all this stuff? Start by pointing your computer's browser at [shifflettbrothers.com](http://shifflettbrothers.com) and you'll quickly find enough links and information about the Shiffletts to keep you occupied for hours.

"This is funny," Jarrod said, "because I can remember ragging Brandon for checking his e-mails, like what the hell are you doing, e-mails? Now we are both online constantly." Thanks to the Internet, the Shiffletts constantly make direct or indirect connections, passing on what they've learned and picking up some valuable information for themselves. "It's like a year-long convention but you are in your underwear," Jarrod said.



High Demon



They still make it a point to get to conventions, though, particularly San Diego Comic-Con. Thanks to such events, the Shifflets have come face to face, and made friends, with many of their idols. "When Mirasawa comes by our booth, I pee a little. Every time. I've learned to shut up and let Brandon talk," Jarrod said. "Bisley has come by our table. Gene Simmons came up and wanted a Draco (the dragon from the movie *Dragonheart*). We've met Soryama, Steve Rude, Sienkewicz; because of our setup in San Diego, people just come by."

Brandon added, "The Danzig parties can get nuts—we've been to three and each was like a separate acid trip unto themselves—and scary! It's like Dracula's castle: enter freely and of your own will. When we did the Dalziel for Verotik, Simon Bisley came by the booth and checked out pictures of the sculpt. He said something like, 'Let's get a drink later,' that was a big deal to us. Alex Ross called us to sculpt a bust of his dad from Kingdom Come, of course as the character Norman. In the end, the highlights come from people you really admire. We were at the Mad Model Party show in L.A. once and Henry Alvarez drove us over to his studio about a half hour away. That was probably the biggest honor we've had as sculptors."

To date, the Brothers haven't made it to the biggest show for model-kit hobbyists. "We really need to get to WonderFest; that's the big show we have not done yet," Brandon said. "I want to hang out with Wayne the Dane (Hansen) and see some people we probably have not seen since the Mad Model Party days, and some of the Chiller shows. We love the conventions because you just collect stories like a mug. The shows are the backbone of the industry."

For now, the Shifflets keep working hard and enjoying it. Fans can expect "more characters and their stories, maybe some team pieces and fight scenes, getting back to our roots," Brandon said. "We just want to have fun and be proud of the things we stand behind at the show. We try and think what we would want to see and that gives us a starting point. The bronze Noynub will be our largest piece yet and that will be exciting."

AFM would like to thank the Shifflet Brothers for taking the time to share their thoughts with our readers!

The Jaguar God for Verotik Comics



Grendel Primery for Bowen Designs



Draco for Moore Creations



The Hulk for Bowen Designs



Dalkiel for Verotik Comics



Juggernaut for Bowen Designs



O' Scratch Bronze



Satanka for Verotik Comics

